



The effects of organizational structure and job characteristics on export sales managers' job satisfaction and organizational commitment

Evangelia Katsikea^{a,*}, Marios Theodosiou^{b,1}, Nick Perdikis^{c,2}, John Kehagias^{d,3}

^a Department of Marketing and Communication, Athens University of Economics and Business, 76 Patission Street, 10434 Athens, Greece

^b Department of Public and Business Administration, School of Economics and Management, University of Cyprus, Kallipoleos 75, P.O. Box 20537, CY-1678 Nicosia, Cyprus

^c School of Management and Business, Cledwyn Building, Penglais Campus, Aberystwyth University, Aberystwyth SY23 3DD, United Kingdom

^d Hellenic Open University, Riga Fereou 169 & Tsamadou, 26222 Patra, Greece

ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Available online 8 December 2010

Keywords:

Organizational structure
Job characteristics
Export sales manager
Work outcomes

ABSTRACT

This study draws on the job-modification framework and the job characteristics model to investigate the relationship between organizational structure, job characteristics, and work outcomes in export sales organizations. The study offers a conceptual framework and an empirical test using data collected from 160 UK exporters. The results indicate that formalization and centralization have a positive impact on job feedback. Moreover, centralization relates negatively to job autonomy and job variety. Higher levels of job autonomy, job variety and job feedback enhance the job satisfaction of export sales managers. In turn, export sales managers' job satisfaction relates positively to organizational commitment. Managerial implications are presented and future research avenues are identified.

© 2010 Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.

1. Introduction

Most organizations employ a variety of control mechanisms to direct and influence the attitudes and behaviors of employees, and ensure that work efforts are channeled towards activities that facilitate the achievement of organizational objectives (Agarwal & Ramaswami, 1993; Jaworski, 1988; Jaworski, Stathakopoulos, & Krishnan, 1993). The design and implementation of an effective control system is particularly important in the case of sales organizations. First, the role of salespeople as revenue generators is critical to an organization's success. Second, for many firms the sales force accounts for the largest portion of marketing personnel and the marketing budget (Cravens, Ingram, LaForge, & Young, 1993). Third, given the relative independence that most salespeople enjoy, an effective control system is necessary to align their attitudes and behaviors with the organization's objectives. Finally, sales managers are responsible for supervising, evaluating, directing, and controlling the activities of field salespeople (Anderson & Oliver, 1987). Therefore, control is an important sales management activity.

Despite the numerous studies investigating the dimensions, the antecedents and the consequences of sales management control, there are still some notable gaps in the literature. First, Jaworski (1988) recognizes that organizational structure is an important control mechanism present in organizations. Surprisingly, few empirical studies attempted to examine the influence of organizational structure on salespeople's behavior. Most existing studies focus their attention on control types which are under the direct authority of field sales managers (e.g., Anderson & Oliver, 1987; Challagalla & Shervani, 1996). The structure of a sales organization determines the nature of the relationship between salespeople and their supervisors and has important implications for the control approach that sales managers can adopt in order to encourage desired behaviors and outcomes. Thus, the influence of organizational structure on salespeople's behavior is an issue that warrants more research attention.

Second, most existing studies examine the direct influence of sales management control on important work outcomes like job satisfaction and sales performance (e.g., Jaworski et al., 1993; Oliver & Anderson, 1994). The findings of these studies are contradictory and inconclusive (Challagalla & Shervani, 1996). The relationship between sales management control and various work outcomes is perhaps more complicated than some studies suggest. One approach to reconcile such conflicting findings is to examine the role of other relevant constructs and investigate an expanded chain-of-effects. Drawing upon the job-modification framework (Oldham & Hackman, 1981) this study attempts to expand the literature by investigating interrelationships between

* Corresponding author. Tel.: +30 2108203417; fax: +30 2108203417.

E-mail addresses: ekt@aub.gr (E. Katsikea), mariosth@ucy.ac.cy

(M. Theodosiou), nip@aber.ac.uk (N. Perdikis), jkehagias@eap.gr (J. Kehagias).

¹ Tel.: +357 22892465; fax: +357 22892460.

² Tel.: +44 (0) 1970 622517; fax: +44 (0) 1970 622409.

³ Tel.: +30 2610367444.

organizational structure, export sales managers' job characteristics, and work outcomes.

Third, existing knowledge regarding control systems and how they influence the job characteristics and work outcomes of salespeople relates mostly to sales activities conducted in a domestic market setting. By contrast, limited empirical evidence is available regarding how exporting firms attempt to influence the behavior and activities of export sales personnel (Katsikea, Theodosiou, & Morgan, 2007; Theodosiou & Katsikea, 2007). The limited research evidence regarding control systems in the context of export operations is disturbing. Exporting is the most popular approach that small- and medium-sized firms (SMEs) adopt in order to enter and penetrate foreign markets (Leonidou, Katsikeas, & Samiee, 2002). Moreover, the responsibility for export sales in these firms is commonly assigned to home-based employees who travel to foreign markets to perform the sales activities. The effective organization and management of export sales personnel are of utmost importance for SMEs' export success.

In light of these, the main objective of this study is to examine empirically the job-modification framework (Oldham & Hackman, 1981) within the context of export sales organizations. In particular, the study aims to demonstrate that the organizational structure adopted by an export sales organization has an important influence on export sales managers' perceptions regarding the core characteristics of their job. In turn, perceptions of job characteristics have an important impact on export sales managers' work outcomes like job satisfaction and organizational commitment. Although the present research does not create new theory *per se*, it makes an incremental contribution to the literature by extending a well established management theory in the neglected context of export sales operations. Furthermore, it sheds more light on the nature of the relationship between control mechanisms and salespeople work outcomes, an issue that remains largely unresolved in the marketing literature.

The remainder of the article is organized as follows. First, we outline the background of the research. Particularly, we discuss the role of organizational structure in influencing the job characteristics of salespeople, and examine how selling activities are organized in export sales organizations. Second, we present the conceptual framework that directed the execution of this research inquiry and develop research hypotheses. Then, we present the research methodology and report the results of statistical analysis. The article concludes with a discussion of study findings, managerial implications, limitations, and directions for future research.

2. Research background

2.1. Organizational structure as a control mechanism

Sales organizations develop appropriate organizational structures to ensure that sales activities are performed effectively and efficiently. The sales organization structure is the vehicle through which strategic plans are translated into selling operations in the marketplace (Ingram, LaForge, Avila, Schwepker, & Williams, 2006). Although many different types of organizational structures exist, research in marketing and sales management has mainly focused on two structural variables: formalization and centralization (e.g., Agarwal, 1993; Hartline, Maxham, & McKee, 2000; Jaworski & Kohli, 1993; Matsuno, Mentzer, & Özsomer, 2002; Michaels, Cron, Dubinsky, & Joachimsthaler, 1988). Formalization is the extent to which work activities are defined formally by administrative rules, policies and procedures (Michaels et al., 1988). Formalization can be viewed as a way to direct, influence and shape employees' behavior so that there is little variability in the job activities performed by different

individuals (Jaworski, 1988). Centralization refers to the inverse of the amount of delegation of decision-making authority throughout an organization, and the extent of participation by organizational members in decision-making (Aiken & Hage, 1968). Greater centralization (as well as formalization) produces uniformity of policy and action, lessens risks of errors by personnel who lack either information or skills, utilizes the skills of central and specialized experts, and enables closer control of operations (Flippo, 1966).

Research in marketing focuses mainly on the influence of formalization and centralization on the level of market orientation (Kirca, Jayachandran, & Bearden, 2005; Kohli & Jaworski, 1990). By contrast, limited research attention has been devoted on the relationship between these structural variables and the work attitudes and behavior of salespeople or other marketing personnel. Therefore, more empirical research is needed in this area. The present study suggests that in order to thoroughly understand the relationship between organizational structure and salespeople's attitudes and work outcomes, the role of job characteristics must be considered.

2.2. Sales job characteristics

Sales job characteristics are generally viewed as an important factor that determines salespeople's motivation, satisfaction, commitment and performance (Becherer, Morgan, & Richard, 1982). In the widely known *job characteristics model*, Hackman and Oldham (1975) identify five primary job characteristics: job variety, task identity, task significance, autonomy, and feedback. Job variety is the degree to which a job requires employees to perform a wide range of tasks. Task identity addresses the extent to which employees do an entire piece of work and can identify with the results of their efforts. Task significance is the degree to which a job has a substantial impact on the lives or work of other people. Job autonomy is the degree to which employees have a say in scheduling their work and freedom to do what they want on the job. Finally, feedback refers to the degree to which employees receive information which reveals how well they are performing on the job.

A review of the sales management literature indicates that research in this area focuses primarily on the implications of job characteristics for salespeople's behavioral outcomes like job satisfaction and organizational commitment. The conceptual rationale in these relationships is based on the notions of motivation and means-end chains (Singh, 1998). Particularly, higher levels of autonomy, variety, and task-identity enhance the level of intrinsic motivation of salespeople by increasing their feeling of accomplishment and self-actualization in their work. Moreover, a high level of feedback provides information about the results of work activities and the efficacy of means for achieving desired goals, clarifying in this way the means-end connections (Ilgen & Hollenbeck, 1991). Empirical findings also support a positive association between job characteristics and salespeople's behavioral and psychological outcomes (e.g., Bhuian & Menguc, 2002; Brown & Peterson, 1993; Singh, 1998).

On the other hand, however, no attempt has been made to examine the factors that determine salespeople's job characteristics. Although by its own nature the sales job possesses certain intrinsic characteristics, organizations can adopt certain work design strategies in order to improve the productivity and the quality of the work experience of employees (Hackman & Oldham, 1976). For this reason, although salespeople represent a more homogeneous group of employees compared to other occupations, their perceptions regarding the level of job variety, job autonomy, job feedback and other job characteristics are likely to vary, depending on the organizational context of the employing

متن کامل مقاله

دریافت فوری ←

ISIArticles

مرجع مقالات تخصصی ایران

- ✓ امکان دانلود نسخه تمام متن مقالات انگلیسی
- ✓ امکان دانلود نسخه ترجمه شده مقالات
- ✓ پذیرش سفارش ترجمه تخصصی
- ✓ امکان جستجو در آرشیو جامعی از صدها موضوع و هزاران مقاله
- ✓ امکان دانلود رایگان ۲ صفحه اول هر مقاله
- ✓ امکان پرداخت اینترنتی با کلیه کارت های عضو شتاب
- ✓ دانلود فوری مقاله پس از پرداخت آنلاین
- ✓ پشتیبانی کامل خرید با بهره مندی از سیستم هوشمند رهگیری سفارشات